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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 005125

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [IT](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [IT](#) [IZ](#) [IZPREL](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIAN MFA ON LEBANON-ISRAEL WATER ISSUE, SYRIA,  
AND PEACE PROCESS

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CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR THOMAS COUNTRYMAN  
FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY: MFA REPORTS THAT THE ITALIAN WATER EXPERT CURRENTLY WORKING THE ISRAELI-LEBANESE WATER DISPUTE MAY SEEK TO HELP BROKER A LONGER-TERM, BROADER SHARING AGREEMENT, BUT AS AN EU INITIATIVE, NOT AN ITALIAN EFFORT. ROME RECEIVED THE PITCH FROM LEBANESE FINANCE MINISTER SINIORA ON THE EU GUARANTEEING BONDS FOR LEBANON. SYRIAN FM AL-SHAR'A LEFT OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF SYRIA FIGHTING IRAQ IF SADDAM STRIKES ANOTHER ARAB STATE. ITALY IS PREPARED TO PROPOSE A CANDIDATE FOR EU SPECIAL ENVOY IF MORATINOS STEPS DOWN. THE GOI TURNED DOWN A SAUDI DEMARCHE ASKING FOR A STATEMENT CONDEMNING RECENT US LEGISLATION ON JERUSALEM. END SUMMARY

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ON THE ISRAEL/PALESTINE WATER DISPUTE  
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2. (C) LUCA FERRARI, EASTERN MED OFFICE DIRECTOR, TOLD POLMC AND NEA WATCHER THAT MAZZITTI, THE EU WATER EXPERT, AN ITALIAN, WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN IN RECENT MEETINGS IN THE REGION THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE NOT AUTOMATICALLY NEGATIVE ON THE IDEA OF AN EU ROLE IN HELPING TO MONITOR AND POSSIBLY NEGOTIATE, IN THE LONGER TERM, AN ACCORD ON WATER SHARING. THE EXPERT'S EFFORTS ARE AND WILL REMAIN AN EU AFFAIR. THE GOI HAS NO INTENTIONS TO BECOME INVOLVED BILATERALLY, NOR TO PAY FOR PUMPS OR METERS, ADDED FERRARI.

3. (C) ROME HOSTED OCTOBER 7 THE LEBANESE FINANCE MINISTER  
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FUAD SINIORA, WHO PRESENTED PM HARIRI'S PLAN FOR DEBT RESTRUCTURING, INCLUDING THE CONCEPT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, OR SOME OF ITS MEMBER STATES, GUARANTEEING BONDS FOR LEBANON. WHILE THE CONCEPT WAS CREATIVE, THE MFA HAD GIVEN NO ENCOURAGEMENT. FERRARI COULD NOT PICTURE THAT THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FINANCE WOULD ACCEPT THE IDEA.

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SYRIA ON A POSSIBLE WAR WITH IRAQ  
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4. (C) FERRARI GAVE A READ-OUT OF THE SEPT. 26 VISIT OF MFA UNDERSECRETARY MANTICA TO DAMASCUS, ONE DAY AFTER PM BERLUSCONI HAD STRONGLY SUPPORTED U.S. POLICY DURING A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON IRAQ. SYRIAN FM FAROUK AL-SHAR'A HAD HARANGUED THE ITALIANS FOR TWENTY MINUTES, CRITICIZING BERLUSCONI'S SPEECH IN DETAIL. SYRIA COULD NOT JUSTIFY TO ITS PEOPLE A PRO-AMERICAN POSITION AGAINST IRAQ. AL-SHAR'A THEN TOOK A BREATH, RELAXED AND EXPLAINED THAT THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR AND A POSSIBLE ATTACK ON IRAQ TODAY IS THAT IRAQ THIS TIME DID NOT ATTACK AN ARAB COUNTRY. SYRIA IS NOT ANTI-AMERICAN, STRESSED AL-SHAR'A, AND WOULD AGAIN FIGHT ALONGSIDE THE U.S. AGAINST IRAQ IF IRAQ WERE TO ATTACK A "FELLOW ARAB COUNTRY." THE ITALIANS ASKED IF AL-SHAR'A MEANT THAT DAMASCUS WOULD FIGHT AGAINST IRAQ IF SADDAM RESPONDED TO A U.S. MILITARY ATTACK BY ATTACKING SAUDI ARABIA OR ANOTHER ARAB NEIGHBOR, TO WHICH AL-SHAR'A REPLIED AFFIRMATIVELY. FERRARI COMMENTED THAT THE SYRIANS ARE STILL QUITE NERVOUS ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF BEING THE NEXT U.S. TARGET AFTER IRAQ.

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ITALIAN CANDIDATE FOR EU MIDDLE EAST ENVOY  
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5. (C) FERRARI RECOUNTED SOME OF THE GOSSIP AND MANEUVERING IN BRUSSELS AND MADRID OVER MORATINOS' EXTENSION AS THE EU REP FOR THE PEACE PROCESS. WHILE FERRARI (UNCHARACTERISTICALLY) HAD SOME GOOD WORDS ABOUT MORATINOS' RECENT EFFORTS WITHIN THE QUARTET FRAMEWORK, HE STATED CLEARLY THAT THE ITALIAN MFA WOULD NOT BE SAD TO SEE HIM RETIRE. THE GOI WAS QUIETLY PREPARING TO PROMOTE THE CANDIDACY OF ITS FORMER AMBASSADOR TO TEL AVIV, GIANPAOLO CARAVAI, TO REPLACE MORATINOS. WHILE EMPHASIZING THAT THIS WOULD ONLY GO FORWARD IF MORATINOS CHOSE NOT TO CONTINUE, FERRARI SAID THAT CARAVAI WOULD BE LOOKING TO GET TO KNOW USG

PEACE PROCESS SPECIALISTS BETTER. (NOTE: WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE ITALIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON HAS ALREADY APPROACHED NEA INFORMALLY).

16. (C) FERRARI SAID THAT THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR HAD "INFORMALLY, BUT FIRMLY" DEMARCHED HIS BOSS, DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR MID-EAST BADINI, TO URGE THAT THE GOI ISSUE A STATEMENT

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SP-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00
	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/007W			

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P 211414Z OCT 02  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6441  
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
AMCONSUL FLORENCE  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES  
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USEU BRUSSELS 2854

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CONDEMNING THE NEW US LEGISLATION ON JERUSALEM. BADINI DECLINED TO DO SO, CITING THE PRESIDENT'S CLEAR STATEMENT THAT THE LEGISLATION DID NOT CHANGE LONG-STANDING USG POLICY. SEMBLER

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